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NETWORK TELEPHONY APPLIANCE AND SYSTEM FOR INTER/INTRANET TELEPHONY

SPECIFICATION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention relates in general to the field of Internet and intranet telephony. More particularly, the present invention relates to a network telecommunications appliance and system for Internet/intranet communications.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 Over recent years, the Internet has evolved from a convenient additional means of communications to an essential communication tool in the business, technical and educational fields. In this regard, a growing segment of the Internet relates to Internet telephony which provides a number of advantages over conventional circuit-switched network controlled by a separate signaling network. For one thing, parties are allowed to more easily select and use encoding and other data
15 compression techniques that are most appropriate for their quality needs. Parties may, for example, decide that for international calls, they would trade lower cost for full toll quality, while a reporter calling in her story to a radio station may go for full FM quality with little regard for price. Even without quality degradation, 5.3 kb/s (G.723.1) to 8 kb/s (G.729) are sufficient to support close to toll quality as opposed to
20 64 kb/s for conventional landline telephone networks. This flexibility also has the advantage that during severe network overload, e.g., after a natural catastrophe, telephone customers can still communicate at about 3 kb/s, thus increasing network capacity twenty-fold.

25 While it is logical to extend telephony services to existing data networks, such as the Internet, because of the intelligence required in the end systems, cost poses a major disadvantage. Previously, it has been difficult to build packet voice "telephones" requiring no external power that operate over low-grade twisted

pair wires several miles long at the cost of a basic analog phone.

In addition, the majority of known Internet telephony products are designed to operate in accordance with the H.323 signaling and control protocol. The H.323 protocol is a complex protocol which is difficult to use and implement. As a result of this complexity, different implementations of H.323 devices may be adversely affected by compatibility issues. In addition, devices operating under the H.323 protocol cannot communicate directly with one another, calls must be processed and routed by a telephony server.

According, there remains a need for a network telephony appliance which is low cost, operates using a simple signaling protocol and offers a vast set of advanced telephony features.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The afore described limitations and inadequacies of conventional telephone systems and known Internet telephony systems are substantially overcome by the present invention, in which a primary object is to provide a packet-based voice communication system for use over the Internet and intranet telecommunications networks.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a packet data telephony appliance for use over a data network, such as an Ethernet network.

It is still another object of the present invention to provide a communication protocol for use in a packet-based telecommunication system.

It is yet another object of the present invention to provide an Internet protocol architecture which supports telephony and other continuous-media or streaming media services such as "Internet radio" and "Internet TV."

It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a low cost, stand alone network telephony appliance capable of direct calling of another network telephone station or indirectly calling another network telephone station party, such as through a redirect server.

In accordance with a first embodiment of the present invention, a network packet data telephone apparatus is provided that includes: a network

controller, such as an Ethernet controller subsystem, coupled to a data network for providing and receiving data packets to and from the network. A digital signal processing subsystem is coupled to the network controller subsystem and operates under a computer program for detecting incoming calls, initiating call sessions and implementing telephony features. A signal conversion subsystem is coupled to the digital signal processing subsystem for converting digital packet information into analog signals and vice versa. A user interface subsystem is coupled to both the signal conversion subsystem and the digital signal processing subsystem for providing user control and feedback to the apparatus. This stand alone network telephony device is referred to herein as a network telephony appliance.

Preferably, the computer program of the network telephony appliance implements the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP). In this case, a unique SIP address is associated with the device and session initiation and control are performed in accordance with the SIP protocol.

The network telephony appliance preferably implements high level telephony functionality including a monitoring feature, call forwarding, streaming audio mode, caller log, callee log and the like.

Preferably, the network telephony appliance includes sensor interface circuitry for receiving signals from remote sources, such as sensors. The signals received from the remote sources are processed by the network telephony appliance and sent to an appropriate network destination.

In another aspect of the present invention, a communication protocol is provided for use in a packet-based telecommunication system, the communication protocol having: an Ethernet protocol layer; an Internet Protocol (IP) layer stacked on top of the Ethernet protocol layer for interfacing with the Ethernet protocol layer; an Address Resolution Protocol (ARP) layer stacked on top of the Ethernet protocol layer for interfacing with the Ethernet protocol layer and the IP layer, and for translating IP addresses into Media Access Control (MAC) addresses; a User Datagram Protocol (UDP) layer stacked on top of the ARP and IP layers for interfacing with the ARP and IP layers and for providing real-time transport of application data and controls within the telecommunication system; a Real-Time Transport Protocol (RTP) layer stacked

on top of the UDP layer for interfacing with the UDP layer and for providing real-time audio data transport within the telecommunication system; one or more control protocol layers stacked on top of the UDP layer for interfacing with the UDP layer and for signaling and providing registration of the real-time audio data; and one or more application protocols stacked on top of the RTP layer for interfacing with the RTP and for formatting the real-time audio data.

In another aspect of the present invention a network telephony system architecture is provided. The system includes at least two network telephony devices, such as a the present network telephony appliance and/or a general purpose personal computer (PC) with suitable interface circuitry and software to operate the PC as a network telephone. A redirect server is also provided which is coupled to the data network along with the network telephony devices. In the system, the network telephony devices can directly address one another to establish a real time audio connection. Alternatively, the redirect server can be accessed by the network telephony devices in order to identify, locate, and initiate a call session with a called party. The redirect server can also be used to implement high level telephony functions, such as call forwarding, multi-party calling, voice mail and the like.

Further objects, features and advantages of the invention will become apparent from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying figures showing illustrative embodiments of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a complete understanding of the present invention and the advantages thereof, reference is now made to the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which like reference numbers indicate like features and wherein:

FIG. 1 is a illustrative diagram of a telecommunications system featuring a conventional circuit-switched voice network operatively coupled to a voice packet network;

FIG. 2 is a block diagram of a packet data network telephone system;

FIG. 3 is a diagram showing a protocol stack for telephony devices operating on the packet data network telephone system of FIG. 2;

FIG. 4 is a block diagram of a preferred hardware architecture of a network telephony appliance in accordance with the present invention;

5 FIG. 5 is a block diagram further illustrating the network telephony appliance of FIG. 4;

FIG. 6 is an exemplary memory map for the DSP of the network telephony appliance of FIG. 5;

10 FIG. 7 is a block diagram of a memory interface for the DSP of the network telephony appliance of FIG. 5;

FIG. 8 is a block diagram of a network controller interface for the DSP of the network telephony appliance FIG. 5;

FIG. 9 is a block diagram of a codec interface for the DSP of the network telephony appliance of FIG. 5;

15 FIG. 10 is an exemplary memory map for the DSP of FIG. 5 showing a mapping of the LCD control interface to DSP memory addresses;

FIG. 11 is a block diagram showing the software architecture for the network telephony appliance of FIG. 4;

20 FIG. 12 is a block diagram showing the scheduling mechanisms of the process level software of FIG. 11;

FIGS. 13A-F are tables illustrating exemplary task definitions for software operations of a preferred method of operating the Packet data network telephone in accordance with the hardware and software architectures of FIGS. 4 and 11;

25 FIG. 14 is a flow diagram of an ARP request output procedure in accordance with the the hardware and software architectures of FIGS. 4, 11 and 13;

FIG. 15 is a flow diagram of an ARP request input procedure in accordance with the hardware and software architectures of FIGS. 4, 11 and 13;

30 FIG. 16 is a diagram showing the IP processing steps in accordance with the hardware and software architectures of FIGS. 4, 11 and 13;

FIG. 17 is a list of exemplary Ethernet transmit data structures according to the software architecture of FIG. 11;

FIG. 18 is a data flow diagram of a packet sending procedure in accordance with the hardware and software architectures of FIGS. 4, 11 and 13;

5 FIG. 19 is a data flow diagram of a packet receiving procedure in accordance with the hardware and software architectures of FIGS. 4, 11 and 13;

FIGS. 20A and 20B show the A/D and D/A "ping-pong" buffer scheme used by the software of the present network telephony appliance;

10 FIG. 21 is a state transition diagram of the *Call_task* process of the present network telephony appliance;

FIG. 22 is chart defining the key pad values for the preferred embodiment of the Packet data network telephone of FIG. 5;

FIG. 23 is a data structure illustrating key state definitions for the preferred embodiment of the present network telephony appliance of FIG. 5;

15 FIG. 24 is a mapping of the I/O parallel port of the network telephony appliance of FIG. 5;

FIG. 25 is a data structure defining the Ethernet controller states of the network telephony appliance of FIG. 5;

20 FIG. 26 is an exemplary RTP header structure for RTP packet processing used in the network telephony appliance network telephony appliance of FIG. 5;

FIG. 27 is a data structure for use with a tone generation function of the Packet data network telephone of FIG. 5;

25 FIG. 28 is a timing diagram for the tone generation function of the network telephony appliance of FIG. 5;

FIG. 29 is a list of data structures used for processing the *SIP_task* requests or responses in accordance with the network telephony appliance of FIG. 5;

FIG. 30 is a state transition diagram illustrating the network telephony appliance operating as a client (initiating a call) in accordance with FIG. 5;

30 FIG. 31 is list of *SIP_task* responses in accordance with the network telephony appliance of FIG. 5;

FIG. 32 is a state diagram illustrating the state transition diagram of a SIP UAS in accordance with the network telephony appliance of FIG. 5; and

FIG. 33 is a block diagram which illustrates part of a packet data network telephony system including one or more network telephony appliances in accordance with the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

FIG. 1 is a block diagram which shows a telecommunications system having conventional telephony and packet telephony components. As shown in FIG. 1, the system includes a circuit-switched voice network 20 coupled to a packet network 30 via a first gateway 12. The figure shows at least three possible interactions between Internet telephony and a conventional "plain old telephony service" (POTS) system: "end-to-end" packet delivery; "tail-end hop off" delivery; and local packet delivery. With "end-to-end" packet delivery, end systems such as network computers, dedicated Internet phones or personal computers (PCs) are used to packetize audio and deliver audio packets to one or more similar end systems for playback. With "tail-end hop off" delivery, packet networks are used for long-haul voice transmission, while standard circuit-switched voice circuits are used for connecting customer premise equipment (CPE), i.e., standard analog telephones, to the packet telephony gateways. "Tail-end hop off" can be used both for individual voice circuits as well as for PBX interconnects, and allows for the bypassing of conventional long-distance services as well as the interconnection of POTS equipment to packet-based audio end systems. With local packet delivery, voice data is generated by packet audio end systems, but carried as circuit-switched voice over leased or public facilities.

FIG. 2 shows a preferred embodiment of an packet data network telephone system 50 according to the present invention. The packet data network telephone system includes: an Ethernet LAN 52, Ethernet phones 54, 56, and 58, a workstation 60, a server 62 and a Ethernet gateway 64. The Ethernet phones are network devices, which can take the form of stand alone devices, such as a network appliance, or a personal computer system with audio input and output peripherals and

operating under the control of an appropriate computer program. With such a packet data network approach, voice data traffic is packetized proximate the end user. The packet data network telephony system of FIG. 2, for example, can include several dozen homes, offices or apartments that are connected to a plurality of Ethernet
5 gateways (only one shown in FIG. 2), each of which is located within the CAT-3S cabling distance limit of 328 feet from the network termination unit. The gateways can, in turn, connect through optical fiber to the neighborhood switch (not shown), or connect directly to the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) via lines 66 as shown in FIG. 2. This architecture has the advantage that a mix of low-bandwidth and
10 high-bandwidth customers can be accommodated without running additional wires. Since switch costs are dominated by interface counts rather than bandwidth, this mechanism offers much higher per-user bandwidth (particularly peak bandwidth), yet switching costs are similar to today's telephone networks. In the architecture of Figure 2, each network device includes a network address and each device can
15 directly access every other network device via the network address. While a specialized server may be desirable to implement certain features, it is not required to establish a call session, i.e., point to point data communications between two or more network devices.

The use of a packet data network LAN 52 is advantageous in that it is a
20 relatively inexpensive solution where conventional PC interfaces and network hardware can be used. The Packet data network LAN 52 can be operated over a variety of media and allows for the easy addition of more devices on a multiple-access LAN. Gateway 64 can be a single DSP that acts as a simple packet voice module and that implements DTMF recognition for user-to-network signaling.

25 FIG. 3 is a block diagram which illustrates a packet data network protocol stack diagram for providing Internet telephony and other continuous-media ("streaming media") services such as "Internet radio" and "Internet TV." As known and understood by those skilled in the art, a "protocol" is generally a set of rules for communicating between computers. As such, protocols govern format, timing,
30 sequencing, and error control. The term "stack" refers to the actual software that processes the protocols and thus allows the use of a specific set or sets of protocols.

The diagram shown in FIG. 3 shows how the various protocols are interrelated in accordance with the present invention.

The protocol stack 80 of FIG. 3 incorporates a number of layered protocols including: a base protocol 82 for providing basic Ethernet message format and timing information; an Address Resolution Protocol (ARP) 84 for interfacing with the base protocol 82 and for translating IP addresses into Media Access Control (MAC) addresses; an Internet Protocol (IP) network layer 86 for interfacing with the base protocol 82; a optional Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP) 88 for interfacing with the base protocol 82; and a User Datagram Protocol (UDP) 90 for interfacing with the ARP 84, IP 86 and DHCP 88 protocols and for real-time transport of application data and controls. The protocol stack 80 further includes the following application-specific protocols for coding speech information: a Real-Time Transport Protocol (RTP) protocol 92 for real-time audio data transport, wherein the RTP protocol 92 generally interfaces with the UDP 90 and modulation, speech codec and control applications 94, 96 and 98, respectively. The application protocols 94 and 96 can take several forms, such as the G.711 pulse code modulation and the G.723 speech codec protocols, respectively. In addition, the Real Time Streaming Protocol (RTSP) layer 97 can be included to provide enhanced performance in streaming media applications. Control protocol 98 is used for session initiation and signaling and preferably takes the form the of the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP).

As shown in FIG. 3, RTP is the preferred protocol for transporting real-time data across the Internet. See H. Schulzrinne, S. Casner, R. Frederick and V. Jacobson, "RTP: A Transport Protocol for Real-Time Applications," Request for Comments (Proposed Standard, RFC 1889, Internet Engineering Task Force (January 1996) which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety. RTP is a "thin" protocol providing support for applications with real-time properties, including timing reconstruction, loss detection, security and content identification. In addition, RTP provides support for real-time conferencing for large groups within an intranet, including source identification and support for gateways, such as for audio and video bridges, and multicast-to-unicast translators. RTP offers quality-of-service feedback from receivers to the multicast group as well as support for the synchronization of

different media streams.

In FIG. 3, the combined stack of the IP, UDP and RTP protocols 88, 90 and 92 add 40 bytes to every packet for low-speed links and highly compressed audio, and 20 bytes for 20 ms of 8 kb/sec. audio. Thus, header compression is desirable.

5 As noted above, the protocol stack 80 of FIG. 3 preferably employs the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) for establishing multimedia exchanges with one or more parties. Instead of using telephone numbers, SIP uses addresses in the form user@ domain or user@ host. This address, for example, can be identical to a person's e-mail address.

10 SIP provides the standard PBX or CLASS functionality, such as call forwarding, call waiting, caller M, call transfer, "camp-on," "call park," and "call pickup." "Camp-on" allows an attendant-originated or extended call to a busy single-line voice station to automatically wait at the called station until it becomes free while the attendant is free to handle other calls. "Call park" allows a user to put a call on
15 hold and then retrieve the call from another station within the system. "Call pickup" allows stations to answer calls to other extension numbers within a user specified call pickup group. Many of these features actually require no signaling support at all, but can be implemented by end system software. SIP is designed as a variant of HTTP/1.1, which allows easy reuse of HTTP security and authentication, content
20 labeling and payment negotiation features.

SIP further employs a calendar-based call handler. The call-processing software accesses a user's personal appointment calendar and answers the phone accordingly. The user can define categories of callers and preset, based on the calendar entry, whether and where their calls are forwarded. The information released
25 to the caller if calls are not forwarded may range, for example, from "is currently not available" to "John Smith is in a meeting until 3 p.m. in Room 5621 with Jane Doe," depending upon the caller's identity. The call handler can also be integrated with a call processing language, a state-based scripting language that allows to construct voice-mail systems or automatic call handling systems in a few lines of code. The call
30 handler also manages the translation between ISDN calls and Internet telephony calls.

FIG. 4 is a high-level hardware block diagram showing a preferred embodiment of an packet data network telephone 100 according to the present invention. As will become apparent throughout this disclosure, the device 100 is a relatively low cost interface product to place voice and data onto a packet data network, such as Ethernet LAN's, intranets and the Internet. Therefore, the device 100 will generally be referred to as a network appliance to reflect the broad applicability of this stand alone device.

The network appliance 100 provides audio and video communications across a local area network (LAN), Internet or other Ethernet network, and generally includes: a network (e.g., Ethernet) controller subsystem 110; a digital signal processing subsystem 120; a signal conversion subsystem 130; and a user interface subsystem 160 coupled to both the signal conversion subsystem 130 and the digital signal processing subsystem 120. The telephone 100 further includes a power supply, ROM 142 and RAM 152. The user interface subsystem may include a speaker 161, a microphone 162 and other user controls 169 as discussed below and with reference to FIG. 5. Interface circuitry 135 for data acquisition and control functions can also be coupled to the signal conversion subsystem 130. Alternatively, such I/O circuitry can be directly coupled to DSP 120.

The network controller subsystem 110 is interposed between the DSP 120 and the external data network and as such provides and receives data packets to and from the data (Ethernet) network. The Ethernet controller subsystem 110 also instructs the digital processing subsystem 120 to accept data received from or to provide data to the Ethernet network. In addition, the network controller subsystem can act as an initial gatekeeper by rejecting and discarding corrupted or unwanted data packets received from the Ethernet network.

FIG. 5 is a block diagram which illustrates the present network appliance in further detail. As shown in FIG. 5, a preferred embodiment of the network controller subsystem 110 includes an Ethernet controller 112, a service filter 114 (10Base-T transformer) and at least one RJ-45 socket 116. Among other things, the network controller subsystem 110 performs the following functions: interfacing the network appliance to the Ethernet network; sending and receiving Ethernet packets; informing

the DSP subsystem 120 to accept the data when the data is available from the Ethernet; receiving the packets from the DSP subsystem 120 and sending same to the Ethernet; and rejecting and discarding unwanted packets from the Ethernet.

As shown in FIG. 5, the Ethernet Controller 112 is preferably the
5 AM79C940 Media Access Controller for Ethernet (MACE) available from Advanced Micro Device (AMD). The MACE device is a slave register based peripheral. All transfers to and from the system are performed using simple memory or I/O read and write commands. In conjunction with a user defined DMA engine, the MACE chip provides an IEEE 802.3 interface tailored to a specific application.

10 Individual transmit and receive FIFOs decrease system latency and support the following features: automatic retransmission with no FIFO reload; automatic receive stripping and transmit padding; automatic runt packet rejection; automatic deletion of collision frames; direct FIFO read/write access for simple interface to DMA controllers or I/O processors; arbitrary byte alignment and
15 little/big/medium memory interface supported; and 5 MHZ-25 MHZ system clock speed.

Referring again to FIG. 5, the digital signal processing subsystem 120 includes a digital signal processor (DSP) 122 and related logical circuits, which include a read-only memory (ROM) 142, a random access memory (RAM) 52, and a
20 erasable programmable logic device (EPLD) 124. The digital signal processing subsystem 120 provides the following functions: digital signal processing, such as speech compression; call progress tone generation, and ring signal generation; general "glue" logic to interconnect DSP, memory and I/O devices; network protocol processing; call flow control and finite-state-machine implementation; keypad activity
25 detection and decoding; and display control.

As shown in FIG. 5, the DSP 122 used in a preferred embodiment of the network appliance can be any suitable commercially available DSP, such as Texas Instruments' TMS320C32. The TMS320C32 DSP has the following features: parallel multiply and arithmetic logic unit (ALU) operations on integer or floating-point data
30 in a single cycle; general-purpose register file; program cache; dedicated auxiliary register arithmetic units (ARAU); internal dual-access memories (512 double words);

two direct memory access (DMA) channels; one serial port; two timers; one external memory port; and a multiple-interrupt structure.

In addition, the TMS320C32 DSP includes four external interrupts and six internal interrupt resources. The external interrupt can be triggered directly by the external pins. The internal interrupt can be triggered by programming the individual peripherals, such as serial port, DMA controller, and timers. In addition, all these interrupt sources can be programmed as the DMA channel interrupt via CPU/DMA enable register, IE. The TMS320C32 DSP also includes a flexible boot loader which enables the main control program for the network appliance automatically loaded from one of three different external memory spaces or the serial port, whichever is appropriate as determined by the activity of the external interrupts of INT0 to INT3 when the DSP 122 is initialized, such as at powered on.

The DSP 122 is generally configured to include the following resource assignments. External interrupts include: INT0: "System boot from 0x1000" indication. when the system is powered on and int0 is active, the DSP will boot the program from external memory space 0x1000; INT1: DMA0 external interrupt signal, used for receiving packets from the network controller 112; INT2: DMA1 external interrupt signal, used for sending packets to the network controller 112; INT3: AM79C940 packet state and error message interrupt. A sample DSP memory map for use in an embodiment of the present network appliance is shown in FIG. 6.

Referring again to FIG. 5, the present network appliance has the user interface subsystem 160 which includes: a key encoder 166, a liquid crystal display (LCD) 164 and a hand set 163, which includes a keypad 165, a microphone 162 and a speaker 161. The user interface subsystem 160 components allow user interaction with the network appliance by providing the following functions: user interface for input (keypad) and output (LCD); voice interface; ring alert output through speaker; and handset or hands-free (microphone and speaker) communication alternative. Through this interface 160 user commands are entered and audio is sent and received to the user.

In addition, the LCD can have buttons adjacent to the display, such as on the side and below. The function of these buttons can operate as "soft keys" the

function of which depends on the current state of the system. For example, when not answering calls, the display can shown a quick dial list and the time of day. In addition, after calls have gone unanswered or been forwarded to voice mail, the display shows can show a list of received calls. During the call, any other incoming calls are displayed, allowing the subscriber to switch between calls or bridge the call into the existing call.

Alternatively, the user interface 160 of the present network appliance 100 can be configured with a small touch screen (not shown) to replace or supplement the LCD display and buttons. The touch screen, which graphically displays available functions and operations and responds to user contact on the display, provides an enhanced user interface, such as for the entry of alphanumeric network addresses and other telephony operations.

FIG. 5 also shows the signal processing system 130, which includes PCM encoder and decoder that performs analog-to-digital (A/D) and digital-to-analog (D/A) conversion, and an audio amplifier 134 coupled to the handset and the corresponding speaker 161 and microphone 162. Also provided is a power supply for providing positive and negative 5V voltage levels from a single AC or DC power supply adapter ("wall wart"). In the preferred embodiment of FIG. 5, negative voltage levels are required by the LCD 164 and the PCM codec 132.

FIG. 7 is a block diagram which illustrates a memory interface 700 suitable for use in the network appliance of FIG. 5. The memory interface 700 includes external memory modules 142 and 152, which themselves include 128 Kbyte of read-only memory (ROM) 142 for program storage and at least 32 Kbytes of double word (32 bit) static random access memory (RAM) 702, 704, 706 and 708. Due to the relatively slow speed of the ROM 142, it is preferable that the network appliance initializes the main program from the ROM and stores this program in the relatively fast RAM for run time execution.

FIG. 8 is a block diagram that shows an exemplary interface between the DSP 122 and the Ethernet controller 124 in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention. The 32 registers of the Ethernet controller 124 are memory mapped at the 0x810000 memory space of the DSP 122 as shown in FIG.

6. Preferably, the first two registers are receiving and transmitting "first in, first out" (FIFO) queues. The DSP 122 exchanges the data with the Ethernet controller 124 via a 16 bit data bus 802.

FIG. 9 is a schematic diagram which illustrates an interface between the DSP 122 and the PCM codec 132 in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention. As shown in FIG. 9, the DSP 122 connects to the PCM codec 132 via an internal serial port 902. The serial port on the DSP 122 is an independent bidirectional serial port.

As shown in FIG. 5, the DSP 122 is also operatively coupled to the LCD 164. The LCD control interface is mapped at the DSP addresses shown in FIG. 10. In one embodiment of the present invention, the LCD 164 is a 120 x 32 pixel LCD such as the MGLS-12032AD LCD, manufactured by Vazitronics. Since the access speed of the LCD is generally slow, data displayed by the LCD can be mapped into the STRB0 (1X1000) memory space of the DSP 122, which is the same memory space as ROM memory space. Preferably, the LCD timing logic is the same as the timing logic for the DSP 122. However, when the LCD is composed of a left-half and a right-half, such as in the MGLS-12032, it is necessary to control and program for both of halves of the LCD when displaying an entire line message.

FIG. 11 is a block diagram showing the software architecture for the present network appliance. As shown in FIG. 11, the processing architecture for the present network appliance is generally organized into three levels: the ISR (Interrupt Service Routine) level 1110; the operating system or Process level 1120; and the application or Task Level 1130. An exemplary list of functions and tasks which can be performed at each of the software levels is provided in Figure 13.

The lowest level, the ISR level 1110, includes interrupt handlers and I/O interface functions. The ISR level 1110 serves as the interface between the process level 1120 and the network appliance hardware shown in FIGS. 4 and 5.

Above the ISR level 1110 is the process level 1120, or operating system, which is preferably a real-time multitasking micro-kernel, such as StarCom's CRTX Embedded Real-time micro-kernel. Generally, the process level software 1120 (micro-kernel) performs memory management, process and task management, and

disk management functions. In a preferred embodiment of the present invention as shown in FIG. 12, the micro-kernel supports three scheduling mechanisms: a Real-time Event Flag Manager 1222; a Delayed Task Manager 1224; and a Scheduling Manager 1226. The micro-kernel has three separate queues for the three different mechanisms above, respectively.

The Real-time Event Flag Manager 1222 is used to trigger the execution of real-time events by way of setting flags. If a flag is set to an "ON" condition, the task associated with the flag is immediately executed. For example, an interrupt service routine would set a particular flag when a certain event occurred.

Flag events are entered on a flag queue with an associated task address.

The Delayed Task Manager 1224 is responsible for timed events. A timed task, such as a fail-safe or "watchdog" task, can be executed after a certain time delay. If a certain event does not occur within a certain time frame, the timer triggers the task causing it to be executed. Another example is the repeated execution of a task controlled by a periodic timer. In an exemplary embodiment, there are 10 timer entries. Each timer is loaded with a tick count and is then decremented on every timer tick from the hardware's interval timer. When the count reaches zero, the task associated with the timer is scheduled on the task queue. The Scheduling Manager 1226 scans the task schedule queue looking for scheduled tasks. Upon discovery of an entry in the queue, control is passed to a scheduled task.

Figures 13a-f are tables which list exemplary software tasks and functions which can be part of the task level software (Figs. 13a-c), process level software (Fig. 13d) and ISR level software (Figs. 13e-f). For the purposes of the present invention, the terms "task" and "function" as referred with respect to the software architecture are considered to be synonymous. However, "tasks" are generally executed by the Scheduling Manager 1226, whereas "functions" are generally called by tasks or other functions. The application tasks, such as the call processing (*Call_task*) and IP processing (*IP_Send_task* and *Ercv_task*, etc.) tasks, are scheduled by the Process level software 1120. The execution of such tasks is a result of a prior scheduling by an ISR, another task, or by the current task itself.

FIGS. 13 A-F illustrate exemplary function and procedure definitions called in an event driven operation performed by the present packet data network telephone software of FIG. 11. The functions, which are called on the occurrence of various events, enable operation of the packet data network telephone/system and include gross operations such as: initializing the Packet data network telephone/system; processing ARP data; encoding voice data; processing message data; processing IP data; decoding voice data; transferring analog and digital data to and from corresponding buffers; and performing "watchdog" functions.

Initialization of the packet data network telephone appliance includes the steps of hardware initialization and task scheduling. After power on, the DSP will automatically transfer the main program from the ROM 142 to the RAM 152 (boot operation). Hardware initialization occurs in a traditional manner, including the steps of: initializing the stack pointer, external bus interface control register, global control register of the DSP, interrupt vector for the ISR, and the like.

After completion of the hardware initialization and preliminary task scheduling, processing control is returned to the process level (micro-kernel) 1120. The CRTX micro kernel 1120 and the scheduled tasks then control further processing.

Referring again to FIG. 13a, the task level software of the present network appliance includes Address Resolution Protocol (ARP) processing. ARP is a known TCP/IP protocol used to convert an IP address into a physical address (called a Data Link Control (DLC) address), such as an Ethernet address. A host computer wishing to obtain a physical address broadcasts an ARP request onto the TCP/IP network. The host computer on the network that has the IP address in the request then replies with its physical hardware address.

FIG. 14 is a flow diagram illustrating of an ARP request output procedure 1400, *ARP_Out()*. As illustrated in FIG 13 B, *ARP_Out()* is a component of the task level software which receives an IP address to be resolved, and outputs a corresponding MAC address. When a ARP request begins (step 1402) the *ARP_Out()* function first checks the requested IP address from a local ARP cache table, *arptable* (step 1404). If the corresponding entry is RESOLVED at step 1406, then *ARP_Out()* copies the MAC address from *arptable* to the requested parameter and returns a

ARPOK status flag (step 1408). Otherwise, the procedure will allocate an entry in the *arptable* and schedules a ARP request (step 1410). As further shown by step 1410, a MAC address, i.e., "handle," of the *arptable* is returned to the main program (*c_int00()*). According to the handle, the software then checks the corresponding entry's *ae_state*.

FIG. 15 is a flow diagram of an exemplary ARP request input procedure 1500, *ARP_In_task()*, which is a component of the task level software listed in Figure 13 A. The *ARP_In_task* receives an ARP packet, and either modifies the *arptable* or queues an ARP reply if the incoming packet is an ARP request. When receiving an ARP packet (step 1502) the software will check whether the packet's ARP hardware or protocol types match (step 1504). If the types do not match, control is returned to the main program (step 1506). If one or both of the types match, then the software checks if the destination host is the present host (step 1510). If the destination host is not the present host, then control is returned to the main program (step 1508).

As further shown in FIG. 15, if the destination host is the current host, then the *ARP_In_task* next checks the ARP table to determine whether there is a corresponding ARP entry for the incoming packet (step 1512). If an entry is found (step 1514), then the new MAC address is copied into the existing entry and modifies the entry's "Time to Live" (TTL) to a new value (step 1516). A TTL is understood by those with skilled in the art to be a field in the Internet Protocol (IP) that specifies how many more hops a packet can travel before being discarded or returned to the sender. However, if there is no such MAC entry is found in accordance with step 1513, then the *ARP_In_task* adds a new MAC entry in the ARP table (step 1518). If the MAC entry is in a PENDING state (step 1520), it is then changed to a RESOLVED state and the MAC address is copied to the target entry (step 1522). If the incoming ARP packet is an ARP request from another host, an ARP reply packet is sent by queuing the *IP_Send_task*, steps 1524 and 1526. Control is then returned to the main program (step 1528).

In addition to the ARP input and output processes, ARP processing at the task level includes an *ARPTimer_task()*, which is a delayed loop task used to

maintain the ARP entry table *arprent*. Nominally, the *ARPTimer_task()* is generated once per second. The main purpose of the *ARPTimer_task()* is to decrease the "Time to Live" (TTL) of the ARP entry and to resend the ARP request during the pending state in case the previous ARP request is lost.

5 Task level processing can also include processing operations associated with the coding and decoding of audio packets. The *Codec_task* generally includes a *SpeechEncode()* function, which encodes speech data from the *ADBuf* buffer to the *EncodeBuf* according to the algorithm indicated by "type" parameter. The coded data is then sent out via the queue *IP_Send_task*, with the "RTP" parameter set.

10 Task level operations can also include Internet protocol (IP) processing. The general IP processing operations are illustrated in the block diagram of FIG. 16. As shown in FIG. 16, IP processing includes the steps of: transmitting and receiving Ethernet packets, step 1602; multiplexing and de-multiplexing IP packets, step 1604; and packetizing and de-packetizing Ethernet, Internet Protocol (IP), User
15 Datagram Protocol (UDP), Real-Time Transport Protocol (RTP) and Address Resolution Protocol (ARP) packets, step 1606.

 In accordance with step 1602 of FIG. 16, Ethernet packet transmission can be performed using direct memory access (DMA) channels of the Ethernet controller 112. DMA is a technique for transferring data from main memory to a
20 device without passing it through the CPU. Since DMA channels can transfer data to and from devices much more quickly than with conventional means, use of DMA channels are especially useful in real-time applications, such as the present network telephony system.

 The network controller 110 preferably supports a plurality of DMA
25 channels, such as the DMA1 channel of the Ethernet controller 112 that can be used for packet transmission. When an Ethernet packet is ready for transmission, the *DMA1()* function, an ISR level function, is called by setting the source address (Ethernet packet buffer, *ESend*), destination address (Ethernet controller's transmit FIFO), and a counter (the packet length). Examples of Ethernet transmit data
30 structures are provided in FIG. 17. The *DMA1()* function then starts the DMA1 channel. When the counter reaches zero, the DMA1 stops and waits for the next call.

FIG. 18 is a block diagram which shows the data flow between an audio input buffer 1802, a UDP buffer 1804 and ARP table 1806 to the Ethernet interface (Ethernet Transmit FIFO) of the Ethernet network controller 112. As further shown in FIG. 18, data from the audio input buffer 1802, the UDP buffer 1804 and the ARP table 1806 is sent to an IP output queue 1810, and is arranged to indicate the protocol type, source pointer and data length. Instead of queuing the sending data, the *IP_Send_task* is queued by process level software (micro-kernal) 1120. The protocol types supported by the *IP_Send_task* generally include UDP, RTP, ARP_REQUEST, ARP_REPLY. *IP_Send_task* is used for packet transmission and Ethernet packetizing. Preferably, *IP_Send_task* is scheduled by other tasks or functions such as *SIP_task*, *ARP_Out()*, *SpeechEncode()*, etc. Once the *IP_Send_task* is run, it checks the protocol type of the data. This task then encapsulates the output data into the corresponding Ethernet packet in the *ESend* buffer. Finally, the packet is sent out via the assigned DMA channel (DMA1).

FIG. 19 is a data flowchart further illustrating packet receiving and de-multiplexing operations. The de-multiplexing is realized by scheduling different tasks for different protocols in the *Ercv_task*. In further accordance with step 1602 of FIG. 16, Ethernet packets are received in the receive data FIFO memory (step 1902) and are further processed by a DMA0 channel controller (step 1904). Since the DSP 122 doesn't know when the packets will arrive, the DMA0 channel is active all the time (i.e., it does not stop even the counter reaches zero). When a packet arrives, the DMA0 channel will automatically copy it from the Ethernet controller's receiving FIFO to the Ethernet receiving buffer, *Ercv* (step 1906). The DMA0 channel stops when there is no data available in the FIFO.

Ercv_task is a flag trigger task for Ethernet packet de-packetizing and IP packet de-multiplexing (step 1908). The *Ercv_task* functions as follows: first, a *PacketCheck()* function is called to check the incoming packet. The *PacketCheck()* will return the protocol type of the packet, or NULL if the packet is invalid. Second, depending on the returned protocol type, the *Ercv_task* will trigger the different tasks to process the received packet, *RTP_In_task* for "RTP" packet (step 1910), *ARP_In_task* for "ARP" packet (step 1912) or UDP processing tasks (step 1912) for

UDP packets, for example.

Referring to FIG. 13 C, *SpeechDecode()* is a voice decoding function associated with the RTP processing of step 1910. First, a *SpeechDecode()* task checks if there are data available in the decoding buffer, *DecodeBuf*. If data is available, e.g.,
5 *RcvFlag* is SET, then *SpeechDecode()* decodes it according to the data type of receiving data, PCM (G.711), G.723, G.729, for example. The decoded data is sent into the D/A buffer, *DABuf*.

The A/D and D/A interrupt routine can be triggered by an internal interrupt source, e.g., *Rint0()*. Preferably, the A/D and D/A interrupt routine is
10 triggered by an 8 kHz sampling frequency provided by the DSP. Since this routine is called frequently, *Rint0()* is preferably written in assembly language. The steps performed by *Rint0()* include the steps of: reading a D/A sample from D/A buffer, *DABuf*; sending the sample to the serial D/A port; obtaining a sample from the serial A/D port; saving the A/D sample to an A/D buffer, *ADBuf*; and incrementing A/D and
15 D/A buffer pointers, *ADPnt* and *DAPnt*, by one.

FIGS. 20A and 20B are block diagrams which show an A/D and D/A “ping-pong” buffer scheme used by the software of the present invention. Further, if the current A/D pointer value (*ADPnt*) exceeds a predetermined buffer threshold (*ADTh*) then a flag is set in the flag task queue indicating that service is required.

20 The A/D and D/A buffers can be divided into two parts, the upper buffer 2002a and lower buffer 2002b, respectively. Both buffers can be designed as circular buffers. In this way, when the current pointer reaches the buffer bottom, it wraps around to its beginning. However, from the encoder and decoder point of view, it is used as a two-frame ping-pong buffer (defined as upper frame and lower frame)
25 scheme. The operation of this process is shown in FIGS. 20A and 20B. For A/D conversion, when the upper (or lower) is full, the data in the upper (or lower) buffer will be passed through ping pong switch 2004 and copied to the speech encode buffer, *EncodeBuf*, 2006. For D/A conversion, if the upper (or lower) buffer is completed, a new frame of data will be copied from the speech decode buffer,
30 *DecodeBuf*, 2010 to the upper 2008a (or lower 2008b) buffer. This mechanism ensures that while the encoding (or decoding) algorithm reads(writes) from one part of

the buffer, the A/D (or D/A) sampling ISR can write (read) the other part of the buffer without conflict.

FIG. 21 is a state transition diagram of a *Call_task* subroutine used in an exemplary embodiment of the present network appliance. *Call_task* is a looped task which handles the call procedure. As shown in FIG. 21, the "Idle" state 2102 occurs when there is no call being made and there is no incoming call. When this condition exists, the *Call_task* loops in the "Idle" state 2102. The "DialTone" state 2104 exists when the receiver state is OFFHOOK, or the handset state indicates HANDSFREE, and thus the *Call_task* state will change from the "Idle" state 2102 to the "DialTone" state 2104 when a OFFHOOK or HANDSFREE condition exists. These states are generally entered by an input by a user through the user controls 160 indicating that a call is to be initiated. When the *Call_task* state is in the DialTone" state 2104, the *Codec_task* will be configured as "ToneMode, DialTone" and a dial tone is sent to the handset components of the user interface 160.

Referring again to FIG. 21, while in the "DialTone" state 2104, if any digit key ('0...'9', '*' and '#') or the redial button is pressed, the call state changes from the "DialTone" state 2104 to the "GetDigit" state 2106. In the "GetDigit" state 2106, the dial tone is stopped at the handset.

After the callee's number has been input and an ENTER button has been pressed by the user to indicate that dialing is complete, the *Call_task* will check if the input is valid. If the number is valid, a call entry is created by a function *CreateSipCall()* and the *Call_task* will go into a "SIP" state 2108. Otherwise, if the input number is invalid, the number is requested again and the state remains at the "GetDigit" state 2106.

While waiting for *SIP_task* processing, several decisions may be made depending on the "SIP" state 2108. The "SIP" state 2108 is a global variable, *SIP_status*, which is modified by the *SIP_task* according to its state transition. If the "SIP" state 2108 changes into SIP_Ring, the *Call_task* will change to the "RingBack" state 2114 and the *Codec_task* will be configured as "ToneMode, RingBack" mode. When the *Codec_task* is in the "ToneMode, RingBack" mode, a ring back tone is sent to the handset.

From the "SIP" state 2108, if the "SIP" state 2108 changes to SIP_busy, the *Call_task* and thus the call will change into "BusyTone" state 2120 and the busy tone will be played at the handset. If the "SIP" state 2108 changes to SIP_Refused, appropriate messages will be displayed on the LCD screen related to the
5 SIP_Refused state.

From the "RingBack" state 2118, if the "SIP" state becomes SIP_Connected, the *Call_task* state changes to the "Talk" state 2116. When the *Call_task* state is in the "Talk" state 2116, the *Codec_task* will be configured as *SpeechEncode* and *SpeechDecode* mode.

10 For incoming calls, while in the "Idle" state 2102, if the "SIP" state 2108 is SIP_Invite, the *Call_task* state changes to the "Ring" state 2114 and the *Codec_task* will be configured as "ToneMode, RingTone." When the *Codec_task* is configured as "ToneMode, RingTone," a ring tone will be played on the loudspeaker. After the SIP state becomes SIP_Connected, the *Call_task* state will change into the
15 "Talk" state 2116. Otherwise, if the SIP state becomes SIP_Cancel, which happens if the caller gives up the call, the *Call_task* state returns to the "Idle" state 2108.

While at the "Idle" state 2102, if the ENTER button is depressed, the *Call_task* calls the *Setting_task*. When the parameter setting program is finished, it will return to *Call_task*.

20 During *Call_task* execution, if the hook state indicates the receiver is ONHOOK, or a system error is found, the *Call_task* changes to the "Idle" state 2102, regardless of what the previous state is (except the "Ring" state 2114).

In the preferred embodiment of the network appliance as shown in FIG. 5, the key pad of the telephone has 17 keys for providing user inputs and commands.
25 The telephone key pad includes 10 digit keys, two special keys and five function keys are defined as shown in FIG. 22.

The *Key_task* is a loop delayed task which runs periodically, such as every 0.1 seconds. When started, *Key_task* first calls the *key()* function. If the return value is not "-1", it means a key has been pressed. Then, the *KeyMap()* function maps
30 the input binary key word to the ASCII key word. The *Key_task* then sets the corresponding member of the *FuncKey* structure. If the system is ready to accept the

key input (the KeyRegEnable is indicated), the input key word is stored into the KeyBuf.

In addition, *Key_task* preferably supports four different input modes: digit input mode, IP address input mode, alphabet input mode, and list address input mode. Switching among the four modes can be done by pressing the ENTER button before dialing any number or alphabet when the handset is picked up and a dial tone is heard. After input is complete and the ENTER button is pressed, the input numbers will be transferred to the current task (*Call_task* or *Setting_task*) by a message pipe. If the Redial key is pushed, the task will copy the previous input from the backup buffer, KeyBackup, to the KeyBuf. Then the data will be transferred to *Call_task*.

The operating system of the present network appliance preferably supports a delayed task schedule scheme. The delayed task is similar to the *sleep()* function in UNIX. However, a delayed task can also be a persistent task execution from a periodic timer when the task's repeating flag is set. For delayed tasks, the process level software 1120 requires an interval timer to provide a system tick. The system of FIG. 5 uses the TMS320C32's timer1, TCLK1, as the system timer base.

The *Clock_task* is a looped delayed task which performs real time clock and calendar functions. It serves as the general clock to calculate and display the current time, including the hour, minute and second. When a call is connected, it can display the call duration. When the phone is on hook, current year, month and date can also be displayed on the LCD.

Referring again to FIG. 11, the Network telephone software of the present invention includes several low-level functions that are included as part of the software ISR level. Some of these low-level functions are I/O related functions, which are used with the telephone's 8-bit I/O parallel port defined in FIG. 24. The low-level, I/O related functions include: the "Hook" state monitor, *Hookst()*; the Key input availability check and read, *Key()*; handset and hands-free control, *HandSet()*; Ethernet controller reset, *ENET_reset()*; volume control, *AmpControl()*; and software reset of the system.

The audio interface chip 136, which preferably takes the form of an LM4830, can be used to control switching between the handset and the hands-free

mode. For example, the *HandSet()* function can write a '0' to the I/O port when "hands-free" mode is required or write a '1' to the appropriate port when "handset" mode is required.

The low-level functions of the present invention also include the
5 Ethernet controller interrupt ISR, *c_int03()*. The global message structure for use with *c_int03()* is defined for the state of the Ethernet controller as shown in FIG. 25. Whenever a packet has been sent, or a received packet is complete, the Ethernet controller will interrupt the DSP 122 to indicate the interrupt. The *DSP 122* will read the transmission and receiving states from the Ethernet controller's register and then
10 store the state into the above state structure. This information can be checked by other tasks. In addition, these messages are read after each packet transmission. Otherwise, the Ethernet controller will be blocked.

As noted above, it is preferred that the present network appliance of the present invention uses the RTP protocol to transmit and receive speech packets in real
15 time. The RTP packet is encapsulated in an UDP packet. The *IP_Send_task* and the *RTP_In_task* modules operate to create and parse RTP packets. FIG. 26 shows an RTP header structure for RTP packet processing.

When the *IP_Send_task* gets a request to send a RTP packet, it first generates an Ethernet and UDP header. Next, it adds the RTP header in the Ethernet
20 packet transmission buffer. Finally, the RTP data is copied into the RTP data area and is sent over the data network.

FIG. 27 shows a data structure for use with a tone generation function, *Tone_task()*. The parameters described in FIG. 27 are illustrated in the tone generation timing diagram of FIG. 28.

25 *Tone_task* is a delayed task which can be executed about every 0.1 second. It is used to count the tone active and stop duration defined in the *ToneType* structure. *Tone_task* sets *ToneState* to ACTIVE during burst and STOP during silence. Different active and stop duration generates different tones. They are: Dial tone, continuous tone (no stop); Busy tone, burst 0.5 s and silence 0.5 sec; Ring back
30 tone, burst 2 sec and silence 4 sec; Ring signal, burst 0.8 sec twice in two seconds, then silence 4 sec.

Preferably, a *ToneGenerate()* module generates a one frame 400 Hz tone or a 2400 Hz ring signal defined by "mode" parameter when ToneState is ACTIVE. Otherwise, one frame silence signal is provided.

The network appliance of the present invention uses UDP as its transport protocol for SIP. *SIP_task* is a looped task that handles SIP signaling. Since
 5 the present network appliance can be used either as a caller or as a callee, *SIP_task* operates both as a UAC (User Agent Client) and a UAS (User Agent Server).

FIG. 29 is source code which shows data structures used for processing the SIP requests or responses in accordance with the SIP protocol. Tstate is the state
 10 transition structure used in *SIP_In_task* and *SIP_task* for SIP state transition. Parsed SIP messages are in the data-structure message_t. The structure call is defined for each call and the total call entries are defined by msg[MaxSipEntry].

FIG. 30 shows a state transition diagram of the *SIP_task* operating as a client (e.g., a caller). When the SIP phone starts a call, it works as a client. A call will
 15 be created via the following steps: a call entry msg[CurrentIndex] is allocated when the phone is picked up and the flag of the call is SET; *CreateSipCall()* creates a SIP packet according to current setting and dial inputs, wherein the SIP package is used as the reference of the call and the us_state is set to UAC; *SIPParse()* generates the message structure (msg[CurrentIndex].m) for the call from above packet; the *SIP_task*
 20 will check if there are any active calls - if there is a call (msg[i].flag is SET), *SIP_task* will create the corresponding request according to the SIP specification and the SIP states will be updated in *SIP_task* as shown in FIG. 30.

FIG. 30 shows an exemplary state diagram for client (caller) operations, referred to as a UAC state transition diagram of *SIP_task*. From an Initial
 25 state (step 3002) a Calling state is entered and a *SIP_task* retransmits a SIP INVITE request periodically (T1) until a response is received (step 3004). Nominally, T1 is 500 ms initially and doubles after each packet transmission. (Step 3006) T2 is nominally 32 seconds. If the client receives no response, *SIP_task* ceases retransmission when T2 timer expires and SIP state will be changed to Cancel (step
 30 3008). If the response is provisional, the client continues to retransmit the request up to seven times. When a final response is received, the state will change to Completed

and a ACK will be generated (step 3010). When the caller gives up, the state will be changed to Bye state (step 3012). BYE requests are also retransmitted during the interval of T1 until T2 expires for the purpose of reliable transmission. The variable, SIP_Status, will be changed according to the response received as shown in FIG. 31.

5 For example, if a 3xx response is received, *SIP_task* will initiate another call to the redirected address. Other final responses can be displayed on the LCD.

When the network appliance receives a call, the *SIP_task* functions as a SIP UAS (server). The incoming packets are processed as follows: *UDP_In_task* accepts the incoming UDP packet and sends the packets to *SIP_In_task* along with its source IP address and port number. *SIP_In_task* processes the packet according to the SIP specification and updates the states accordingly. *SIP_task* will monitor the receiver state, set and decrease the T1 and T2 timer of each call and update the SIP states if necessary.

FIG. 32 illustrates an exemplary state transition diagram of a SIP UAS.

15 While the *SIP_task* remains at an Initial state (step 3205), it listens to the incoming SIP packets. If an INVITE request is received, it generates a Ringing(180) response and its state changes to Invite and the *Sip_task* module would advance to a Proceeding step (step 3210). If a called party picks up the telephone, the status changes to Picks Up and the process advances to Success (step 3215), indicating a successful call session has been established. If the called party does not pick up, the status changes to Failure and the process advances to the Failure state (step 3220). After success or failure, the client will acknowledge the current status and advance the process to the Confirmed state (step 3225). When the calling party terminates the session, the status changes to Onhook and the process advances to Bye (step 3230) indicating that the current session has been completed.

25 As set forth herein, the network appliance is a stand alone device capable of initiating and receiving telephone calls on a packet data network. While the stand alone architecture described herein offers many attendant advantages, such as its relatively low cost to implement, similar software architecture and functional definitions described in connection with the stand alone appliance 100 can also be provided on a PC based telephone device. In such a case, a conventional personal

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computer having a microphone, speakers and suitable network interface card, is provided with software to operate consistently with the manner described above. Of course, obvious changes are effected in this embodiment, such as the user interface components and functions being performed by conventional elements of the PC, e.g., the keyboard, monitor, mouse and the like. A GUI interface to the telephone functionality is provided by the software to enable the desired telephony functions.

The network appliance of the present invention, in addition to performing traditional telephony functions, can also provide a cost effective interface between the network and the environment. While equipping sensors with Ethernet interfaces is not feasible, due to the large number of ports required and the cost of the minimal hardware required, the network appliance of the present invention can become the gathering point for a number of digital and analog sensors. This is accomplished generally by coupling the external sensor to the network appliance via the conventional I/O circuitry 135 which is coupled to the DSP 122. The I/O circuitry can take the form of simple buffers, A/D converters, registers and the like. This feature is particularly useful in environments that have phones for security reasons, e.g., elevators, lobbies, shop floors, garages, etc. Examples include: Passive infrared (PIR) digital sensor for detecting the presence of people - this can be used for automatically forwarding calls if nobody is in the office or as part of a security or energy management system; analog or digital light sensor to detect whether the office is occupied; analog temperature sensor; smoke, carbon monoxide and radiation detectors; and contact closures for security systems. Thus, the present network appliance provides a point of system integration.

To provide further enhanced I/O capability, the I/O circuitry can be compatible with local control protocols such as the X10 and CEBus protocols which are recognized standards for controlling line-powered devices such as lighting or appliances. Adding such an interface to the phone provides for network-based control of such devices.

Figure 33 illustrates a system employing the present network appliance for establishing calls between two or more parties on the network. The system generally includes one or more stand alone network appliances 100, such as described

above. In addition, the system can also include PC based telephony devices 3320, such as a network enabled PC operating suitable network telephony software which is protocol compliant with the network appliance 100. Each telephony endpoint can be referred to as a node and has a specific SIP address. By employing this specific
5 address, any node acting as a calling party (client) can directly initiate a call session with any other node on the network (server).

The system preferably also includes a redirect server 3325 which can be accessed by the various nodes on the network to provide enhanced services, such as a directory service, call forwarding, call branching, call messaging and the like. For
10 example, a calling party wishing to initiate a call to JOHN SMITH can enter the SIP address for that person if it is known, such as sip:john.smith@work.com. If, on the other hand, the calling party does not know the SIP address of the party, the calling party can contact the redirect server 3325 with a request to begin a session with JOHN SMITH. The redirect server includes databases with registration information for
15 various parties and can return the SIP address to the calling party or forward the call request to the proper SIP address. In addition, the called party may have multiple sip addresses such as john.smith@ home, john.smith@office, john.smith@lab and the like. The redirect server can provide a session initiation signal to each of these addresses and establish a connection between the calling party and the first contacted
20 node that responds to the initiation request. Similarly, parties can periodically register with the redirect server to indicate the current SIP address where they can be contacted (call forwarding feature).

The network appliance 3305 can be configured to interface to one or more sensors 3310. Signals from the sensors are received by the network appliance
25 3305 and can be sent along the network to a desired network node. The signals from the sensors can be detected periodically by a timer in the network appliance and sent to a SIP address stored in memory. Alternatively, the sensor signals can be measured by the network appliance 100 based on a command received from another node (polled by a remote network node) or can be measured based on a received interrupt
30 signal indicating a change of state of the sensor (interrupt driven). For example, the network appliance 100 can be used as a security system communication device which

reports the status of various security sensor points to a central monitoring station. In such a case, the appliance can periodically check the status of the connected sensors, such as door sensors, fire sensors, passive infrared detectors and the like, and report to a central station node the current status. In the event of a status change that would indicate an alarm condition, the appliance 100 could generate a call session with the central station and report this condition as well. Of course, the same appliance which is acting as an alarm communicator can also provide full telephony functions as well. In addition, while a simple security application was described, it will also be appreciated that various other data collection and control applications generally known as SCADA (site control and data acquisition), can be implemented using the present network appliance 100.

To maintain lifeline service during power outages, the network appliance of the present invention can be equipped with a rechargeable battery, possibly integrated into a wall transformer.

As many locations are currently equipped with only one Ethernet interface, the network appliance of the present invention should provide a two-port Ethernet hub, with an external RJ-45 interface. This provides for simultaneous operation of both the telephony device and network enabled computer.

In addition to audio data, the present network appliance can also receive and transport video data. For example, a video input interface, either analog or through a USB (Universal Serial Bus) can be operatively coupled to DSP 122 to implement this feature.

The present network appliance 100 can also be coupled to a suitable wireless Ethernet interface to allow the equivalent of a cordless phone.

The following protocols can be added to the present network appliance 100 to provide expanded functionality: DHCP and RARP for automatic assignment of IP addresses; IGMP for subscribing to multicast groups; RTSP for retrieving voice mail and distinctive ringing signals; SAP for listening to announcements of multicast "radio" events; and DNS for name resolution (subject to available program memory space).

In addition to basic telephony operations, the present network appliance can also provide high level telephony functions. For example a "Do not disturb" feature can be provided that automatically forwards calls for a given duration to a designated location as specified by a SIP address input by the user. Each time the feature is selected, such as by depressing a button on the user interface, the time increases by a predetermined interval (e.g., 15 minutes).

"Call logging" can also be provided wherein the SIP address and related information regarding incoming calls is logged by storing the information in memory, with the ability to call back the calling party by scrolling through the list and selecting the SIP address of the caller from the log by user interaction via the user interface subsystem 160.

The network appliance can also include an "Automatic address book." Through user input or via a server connected on the network, the network appliance can acquire a speed dial list or a list of names stored in its local memory which a user can scroll through (using the SIP "multiple choices" response);

An "Interface to voice mail system" feature can display all unanswered calls that have come in, including the time of call, the caller, the subject and urgency of the call and whether the caller left voice mail. Calls can be ordered chronologically or by urgency. The call display preferably features five soft buttons: to delete the entry, to move forward and back through the list, to return the call and to retrieve the message.

"Distinctive ringing" is a feature wherein the appliance 100 is programmed to announce certain callers by a distinct sound clip, such as a distinctive ring, melody or the name of the caller. In this case a small database associates a caller, or a class of callers (e.g., friend, customer, urgent) to a particular selected ring response. The sound clip is played either from memory or retrieved from a server;

"Call forwarding" is a further feature which can be implemented in the appliance 100. Typically, calls are forwarded by the proxy redirect server. However, the network appliance 100 can also perform simple forwarding itself, as described above for the "do not disturb" button. The redirection may take the form of calling the phone from another phone with a REGISTER command, to implement follow-me

calls. Also, automatic forwarding of calls from certain domains or during certain hours is readily implemented without use of a redirect server.

“Intercom” mode is a feature where incoming calls are “picked up” automatically, with the microphone disabled until a push-to-talk button is pressed or the receiver is lifted. This can also be used as part of a security public address system.

“Baby monitoring” features allow the network appliance to act as a remote audio monitoring device. For example, on receipt of an incoming call, the network appliance 100 is activated with the speaker disabled but with the microphone automatically enabled such that the calling party can listen to the environment where the called appliance is located. This feature can be selectively engaged, such as by a predetermined code or caller identity;

An “Internet radio” feature allows the network appliance 100 to automatically play radio stations supplied by a local RTP multicast server or other streaming media source when a call is not being received or initiated. The appliance 100 can listen for SAP announcements and can display the station list on the display, with soft buttons. Any incoming phone call interrupts the current radio program.

The present network appliance can also maintain a “Callee list.” If a previous call was successful, the callee’s address is automatically entered into a portion of memory used as a local guide-dial list. When this party is to be dialed again, the callee can be selected by the upward or downward key from the callee’s list. This is generally a FIFO type memory structure which automatically purges old entries and replaces them with more current entries; and

“Redial,” which allows single key dialing of either the last number dialed or the last callee .

In addition, “Speech processing enhancement,” such as silence suppression, comfort noise generation, and echo cancellation can also be included in the present network appliance in a manner which is well known in the telephony art.

Thus, a network-based telephone that is a stand-alone “Internet appliance” that allows the user to make phone calls within a local area network (LAN) or across the Internet has been disclosed. Its core is a single digital signal processor (DSP) (a microcontroller optimized for processing audio and video data). It provides

services that are a superset of those of a regular telephone, but connects and Ethernet data network instead of to the PSTN (Public Switching Telephone Network). Since Ethernet running at 10 Mb/s can use the same twisted-pair wiring used for analog and digital phones, the Packet data network telephone does not require rewiring customer premises. A minimal system consists of two Packet data network telephones connected by an Ethernet cross-over cable. A multi-line basic PBX can be implemented consisting of any number of Packet data network telephone connected to an Ethernet hub or switch. This "PBX" can scale to any number of phones, simply by adding Ethernet capacity and ports. The Packet data network telephone shares the Ethernet with other LAN services. In almost all cases, voice traffic will be a small fraction of the network capacity. (A single voice call consumes about 16 kb/s of the 10 Mb/s capacity.) The Packet data network telephone offers voice communications, implementing the customary features of PBXs. However, the present network appliance may use a server located in the LAN or the Internet to provide additional functionality, such as user location and directory services, call forwarding, voice mail, attendant services.

A PBX based on the current network appliance can reach traditional phones through an Internet Telephony Gateway (ITG). Such a gateway connects to the PSTN using either analog lines, ISDN basic or primary rate interfaces or digital trunks (such as T1/E1). ITGs have recently been introduced as commercial products, with capacities of one to about 240 lines.

Although the present invention has been described in connection with particular embodiments thereof, it is to be understood that various modifications, alterations and adaptations may be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. It is intended that the invention be limited only by the appended claims.

CLAIMS

1. A network appliance for providing packetized data over a packet data network, comprising:
 - a network controller subsystem coupled to said packet data network;
 - 5 a digital signal processing subsystem coupled to said network controller subsystem, the digital signal processing subsystem further comprising a computer program for detecting incoming calls and initiating call sessions;
 - a signal conversion subsystem coupled to said digital signal processing subsystem; and
 - 10 a user interface subsystem coupled to both the signal conversion subsystem and said digital signal processing subsystem.
2. The network appliance according to claim 1, wherein said digital signal processing subsystem comprises a digital signal processor (DSP) and one or more memory devices coupled to said digital signal processor.
- 15 3. The network appliance according to claim 2, wherein said computer program implements the Session Initiation Protocol for detecting and initiating call sessions and performing call session control.
4. The network appliance according to claim 3, wherein a unique SIP address is associated with the appliance, said address being stored in at least one
20 of said memory devices.
5. The network appliance according to claim 4, wherein the packetized data includes audio data and wherein the user interface subsystem comprises:
 - a handset comprising an input device, a microphone and a speaker;
 - 25 and
 - a display device.

6. The network appliance according to claim 5, wherein said computer program implements a monitor feature, wherein on detection of a call directed to the appliance from a caller, a call session is automatically initiated with said microphone enabled and said speaker disabled during the call session.

5 7. The network appliance of claim 6, wherein identifying criteria of at least one approved caller is stored in at least one of said memory devices and wherein said digital signal processor receives identifying criteria from the caller and activates the monitor feature only if the received identifying criteria matches at least one of the stored identifying criteria of said at least one predetermined approved
10 caller.

8. The network appliance of claim 7, wherein said identifying criteria are selected from the group including name, SIP address and password.

9. The network appliance according to claim 3, wherein the computer program implements a call forwarding feature, wherein at least one
15 forwarding SIP address is stored in at least one of said memory devices, at least one of said forwarding SIP addresses being selectable by a user via said user interface subsystem, and wherein on detection of a call directed to the appliance from a caller, said call is redirected to the selected forwarding SIP address.

10. The network appliance according to claim 9, wherein said call
20 forwarding feature is activated for a predetermined time in response to an input from the user.

11. The network appliance according to claim 9, further comprising a sensor coupled to said appliance for detecting the absence of a human being, wherein said call forwarding feature is activated in response to a signal from said
25 sensor.

12. The network appliance according to claim 1, wherein the user interface subsystem includes an output device and wherein the computer program implements a streaming media mode wherein streaming data is received from the network and is converted to perceptable signals provided to said output device.

5 13. The network appliance according to claim 12 wherein the output device includes a speaker and wherein when no call session is in progress streaming data is received from the network and is converted to audio signals provided to said speaker.

10 14. The network appliance according to claim 13 wherein the program reverts out of streaming media mode in the event a new call session is initiated.

15 15. The network appliance according to claim 12 wherein the output device includes a speaker and wherein streaming data is selectively received from the network and is converted to audio signals provided to said speaker.

15 16. The network appliance according to claim 12 wherein the streaming data is received from the network and is selectively forwarded to another device during a call session where the data is convertible to perceptable signals by said device.

20 17. The network appliance according to claim 12 wherein the output device includes a video display and wherein streaming data includes streaming video data which is selectively received from the network and is converted to video signals provided to said display.

25 18. The network appliance of claim 3, wherein the user interface subsystem includes a display device and wherein the digital signal processor detects the SIP address of callers and stores a plurality of caller SIP addresses in at least one

of said memory devices, said plurality of caller SIP addresses being displayable on said display device and selectable in response to an input from the user interface subsystem.

19. The network appliance of claim 3, wherein the user interface subsystem includes a display device and wherein the digital signal processor stores a plurality of called SIP addresses in said memory device, said called SIP addresses corresponding to the address of successfully initiated call sessions and being displayable on said display device and selectable in response to an input from the user interface subsystem.

10

20. The network appliance according to claim 1, wherein said network controller subsystem comprises an Ethernet controller and a service filter.

15

21. The network appliance according to claim 2, wherein said digital signal processing subsystem further comprises:

an analog-to-digital (A/D) converter for converting incoming audio data into digital incoming audio data;

an encoder coupled to said A/D converter for encoding said digital incoming audio data;

20

a decoder for decoding digital outgoing audio data provided by said digital signal processing subsystem;

an digital-to-analog (D/A) converter coupled to said decoder for converting digital outgoing audio data into outgoing audio data; and

an audio amplifier coupled to the handset and the corresponding speaker and microphone for conditioning said incoming and outgoing audio data.

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22. The network appliance according to claim 1, wherein the computer program further comprises:

an Ethernet protocol layer;

an Internet Protocol (IP) layer stacked on top of said Ethernet protocol

layer for interfacing with said Ethernet protocol layer;

an Address Resolution Protocol (ARP) layer stacked on top of said Ethernet protocol layer for interfacing with said Ethernet protocol layer and said IP layer, and for translating IP addresses into Media Access Control (MAC) addresses;

5 a User Datagram Protocol (UDP) layer stacked on top of said ARP and IP layers for interfacing with said ARP and IP layers and for providing real-time transport of application data and controls within said telecommunication system,;

a Real-Time Transport Protocol (RTP) layer stacked on top of said UDP layer for interfacing with said UDP layer and for providing real-time audio data
10 transport within said telecommunication system;

one or more control protocol layers stacked on top of said UDP layer for interfacing with said UDP layer and for signaling and providing registration of said real-time audio data; and

one or more application protocols stacked on top of said RTP layer for
15 interfacing with said RTP and for formatting said real-time audio data.

23. The network appliance of claim 22, wherein said application protocols include an RTSP protocol layer.

24. The network appliance according to claim 1, further comprising at least one sensor interface circuit, said sensor interface circuit being operatively
20 coupled to the digital signal processing subsystem and having a port for operatively coupling the appliance to a remote sensor.

25. The network appliance according to claim 24, wherein the digital signal processing subsystem acquires data from the sensor interface circuit at predetermined time intervals, formats the acquired data as network packet data and
25 transmits the data to a predetermined destination on the network.

26. The network appliance according to claim 24, wherein the digital signal processing subsystem acquires data from said sensor interface circuitry

in a substantially continuous manner and formats the acquired data as network packet data and transmits the data to the network when said acquired data satisfies at least one predetermined criterion.

27. The network appliance according to claim 24, wherein the
5 sensor interface circuitry includes an interrupt service request input and wherein said digital signal processing subsystem acquires data from said sensor interface circuit in response to a signal on said interrupt service request input, formats the acquired data as network packet data and transmits the data to a predetermined destination on the network.

10 28. The network appliance according to claim 24 wherein the computer program includes a call forwarding feature, said feature being selectively enabled in response to a signal applied to said sensor interface circuit.

29. The network appliance according to claim 28 further
15 comprising a sensor for detecting the presence of a human being coupled to said sensor interface circuit and providing the signal for selectively enabling the call forwarding feature.

30. A packet data network system comprising:
at least one data network appliance for receiving and generating
packetized data, said data network appliance comprising:
20 a network controller subsystem coupled to said packet data network;
a digital signal processing subsystem coupled to said network
controller subsystem, the digital signal processing subsystem further comprising a
computer program for detecting incoming calls and initiating call sessions;
a signal conversion subsystem coupled to said digital signal
25 processing subsystem; and
a user interface subsystem coupled to both the signal conversion
subsystem and said digital signal processing subsystem;

a local area network coupled to said data network appliances for networking said data network appliances; and

a gateway coupled to said local area network for receiving voice data from a conventional telephone network and for providing and receiving packetized
5 voice data from and to said data network appliances.

31. A packet data network system comprising:

a packet data network;

at least two data network telephone nodes for receiving and generating packetized data including voice data, each node having a unique network address, said
10 telephony nodes being operatively coupled to said packet data network and being directly accessible by each other telephony node by said address;

a redirect server, said server being operatively coupled to said network and being accessible by each node on said network, said server having at least one database relating the unique network addresses of at least one node on said network to
15 at least one parameter.

32. The packet data telephone system of claim 31 wherein the unique network addresses are SIP addresses.

33. The packet data telephone system of claim 31, wherein the at least one parameter is a redirection network address associated with said unique
20 network address of a registered telephony node, said server providing the redirection network address to nodes accessing the server to initiate a call with said registered telephony node.

34. The packet data telephone system of claim 31, wherein the at least one parameter is a plurality of redirection network addresses associated with said
25 unique network address of a registered telephony node, said server broadcasting a call request to each of the redirection network addresses in response to a node accessing the server to initiate a call with said registered telephony node, and said server

initiating a call session between the node accessing the server and the first redirect network address node to respond to said broadcast.

35. The packet data telephone system of claim 31, wherein the at least one parameter is a plurality of redirection network addresses associated with said unique network address of a registered telephony node and said database further includes at least a second parameter, said server providing a selected redirection network address to nodes accessing the server to initiate a call with said registered telephony node in accordance with said second parameter.

36. The packet data telephone system of claim 35, wherein said second parameter is the day of the week.

37. The packet data telephone system of claim 35, wherein said second parameter is the time of the day.

38. The packet data telephone system of claim 35, wherein said second parameter is the SIP address of the calling party.

39. The packet data telephone system of claim 31, wherein the first parameter includes a name and physical address of the node.

40. The packet data telephone system of claim 31, wherein at least one of the telephony nodes is a network appliance in accordance with claim 1.

41. A communication protocol for use in a packet-based telecommunication system, comprising:
an Ethernet protocol layer;
an Internet Protocol (IP) layer stacked on top of said Ethernet protocol layer for interfacing with said Ethernet protocol layer;

an Address Resolution Protocol (ARP) layer stacked on top of said Ethernet protocol layer for interfacing with said Ethernet protocol layer and said IP layer, and for translating IP addresses into Media Access Control (MAC) addresses;

5 a User Datagram Protocol (UDP) layer stacked on top of said ARP and IP layers for interfacing with said ARP and IP layers and for providing real-time transport of application data and controls within said telecommunication system,;

a Real-Time Transport Protocol (RTP) layer stacked on top of said UDP layer for interfacing with said UDP layer and for providing real-time data transport within said telecommunication system;

10 one or more control protocol layers stacked on top of said UDP layer for interfacing with said UDP layer and for signaling and providing registration of said real-time audio data; and

one or more application protocols stacked on top of said RTP layer for interfacing with said RTP and for formatting said real-time data.

15 42. The communication protocol according to claim 41, wherein the application protocols include an RTSP protocol layer.

43. A computer program for operating a network device, comprising:

20 a first layer of instructions for providing interrupt services and low-level functions;

a second layer of instructions comprising the operating system and instructions for performing process level functions; and

25 a third layer of instructions for performing application-specific tasks and high-level functions, including the Session Initiation Protocol for detecting and initiating call sessions and performing call session control.

44. The computer program for operating a network device according to claim 43, wherein said computer program implements a monitor feature, wherein on detection of a call directed to the appliance from a caller, said microphone

is automatically enabled and said speaker is automatically disabled during the call.

45. The computer program for operating a network device according to claim 44, wherein identifying criteria of at least one approved caller is stored in said device and wherein identifying criteria from a caller is received, the
5 program activating the monitor feature only in response to said caller being a predetermined approved caller.

46. The computer program for operating a network device of claim 45, wherein said identifying criteria are selected from the group including name, SIP address and password.

10 47. The computer program for operating a network device according to claim 43, wherein a call forwarding feature is provided, wherein at least one forwarding SIP address is stored in the device, one of said forwarding SIP addresses is selectable by a user, and wherein on detection of a call directed to the device from a caller, the call is redirected to the selected forwarding SIP address.

15 48. The computer program for operating a network device according to claim 47, wherein said call forwarding feature is activated for a predetermined time in response to an input from the user.

20 49. The computer program according to claim 47, wherein a signal from a sensor for detecting the absence of a human being is provided to said program as an input and wherein said call forwarding feature is selectively activated in response to the signal.

25 50. The computer program for operating a network device according to claim 43, wherein the computer program implements a streaming media mode wherein streaming data is received from the network and is converted to perceptable signals by said network device.

51. The computer program for operating a network device according to claim 50, wherein when no call session is in progress, streaming data is received from the network and is converted to audio signals provided to said device.

52. The computer program for operating a network device
5 according to claim 51, wherein the program reverts out of streaming media mode in the event a new call session is initiated.

53. The computer program for operating a network device according to claim 50, wherein the streaming data is received from the network and is selectively forwarded to another device during a call session where the data is
10 convertible to perceptable signals by said another device.

54. The computer program for operating a network device according to claim 50, wherein the network device includes a video display and wherein streaming data includes streaming video data which is selectively received from the network and is converted to video signals provided to said display.

15 55. The computer program for operating a network device of claim 43, wherein the program detects the SIP address of callers and stores a plurality of caller SIP addresses in said network device, said plurality of caller SIP addresses being displayable on said network device and selectable in response to an input from the user.

20 56. The computer program for operating a network device of claim 43, a plurality of called SIP addresses are stored, said called SIP addresses corresponding to the address of successfully initiated call sessions and being displayable on a display device and selectable in response to an input from the user interface.

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US00/40175

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) : H04L 12/66; G06F 17/00, 15/16

US CL : 370/352; 709/204, 227, 231

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 370/352; 709/204, 227, 231

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

East

search terms: internet intranet telephony ARP UDP DSP

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y,P	US 5,867,495 A (ELLIOTT et al) 02 FEBRUARY 2000, col. 1, lines 5-34, col. 8, line 28 - col. 9, line 53.	1-56
Y,P	US 6,009,469 A (MATTAWAY et al) 28 DECEMBER 1999, col. 1, line 60 - col. 3, line 27.	1-65

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. ☐ See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:	*T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
A document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	*X* document of particular relevance, the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
E earlier document published on or after the international filing date	*Y* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
L document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	*Z* document member of the same patent family
O document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	
P document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search

11 SEPTEMBER 2000

Date of mailing of the international search report

04 OCT 2000

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